



DSHS eliminates virgin paper and reduces paper purchases by 7.5 percent

In fiscal year (FY) 2008, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) employed 20,091 staff and provided services to 1.5 million clients each year. One of every four residents in the state and two of every five children and youth receive services from DSHS. DSHS occupies 9.2 million square feet of space in 166 leased worksites and 22 owned residential facilities.

DSHS's mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals and families in need - we help people achieve safe, self-sufficient, healthy, and secure lives. We are dedicated through our sustainability plan to improve the quality of life and to promote healthy environments for the communities in which we work and live.

We strive to reduce the environmental impact of the Department. Despite a 2+ percent increase in agency staff in FY08, we decreased overall paper purchases by 7.5 percent over FY 2007 and reams per staff member decreased by 11percent, from 21.3 to 19.1 reams per staff. While decreasing our paper purchases, we significantly increased the recycled content in our paper purchases. We more than doubled the purchases of 100 percent recycled paper and we reduced virgin paper purchases from over 73,000 reams to less than 5,000 reams.

Our large agency accomplished such feats through education, awareness, and communication -- one email at a time. In March 2007 our 20 member DSHS Sustainability Team began to emphasize the elimination of purchases of virgin paper by identifying and communicating with offices still purchasing virgin paper. By December 2007, virgin paper purchases were eliminated.

Next, we set out to remind the agency staff of the Executive Orders and the agency's goals regarding paper purchases, then spoke about our paper purchases' impact on trees and the environment then things each of us could do. We created a "how to set up your print jobs to duplex" document and sent out an announcement about the document. This announcement made quite an impression on our staff and soon after we started seeing the numbers drop and our purchases move to higher recycled content.

Our FY08 numbers improved greatly because of the communication efforts regarding paper goals and our usage. Due to the higher cost of recycled paper and our recent budget shortfalls, for FY09, the DSHS Sustainability Team is focusing staff attention on reducing paper use rather than on amount of recycled content. Our second fiscal quarter results show DSHS at an 11% reduction over FY08's year to date average. If we continue at this rate, could translate to approximately \$165,000 in savings!

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